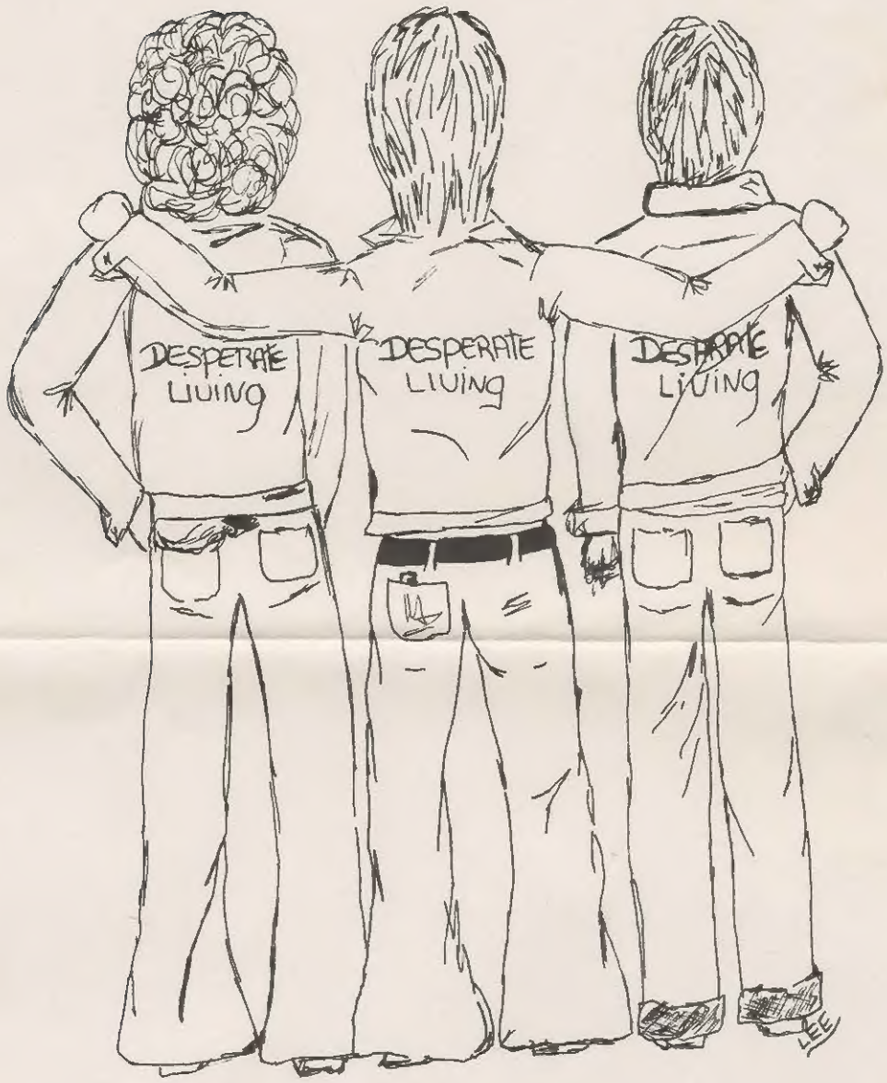
DESPERATE LIVING

A Lesbian Newsletter



July-Aug. Issue

Vol. 1 Issue 2

I Wish I Had a Wine Red Apple Here to Fondle and Bite

I hide in the kitchen under the table watching everybody from a fetal position with the cookie crumbs and the old mad ghosts with jagged edges which haven't been dusted off, put aside in glass cases for everyone to look at. People go by and don't notice. I pinch their toes when they stick their feet under the table. The ghosts and I laugh and scream to ourselves. After everyone has passed to the gallery we dance on top of the kitchen table and bang frying pans on our heads.

Brook

Logo Contest

ONLY LESBIANS MAY ENTER THE CONTEST!!!!

We are continuing the LOGO CONTEST. So if you forgot to get your entry in the mail (and you did), We are giving you another chance. O.K. team all ya have to do is this: (a picture or design containing the words Desperate Living. All entries should be in black and white)

GRAND PRIZE

A date with any member of the staff.Send entries to;

Desperate Living
c/o S. Baker
3200 Ellerslie Ave.
Baltimore, Md., 21218

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Desperate Living is a newsletter published by Baltimore lesbians. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide a place where lesbian women can share their thoughts and their creative work; and find out about the events and projects which concern them both locally and nationally. We will try to print anything that relates to lesbians as long as we feel it is not oppressive; such as statements which are racist, classist, or sexist.

Desperate Living will not succeed without your help and support. We need that help and support in the form of subscriptions, donations, ads, articles, poetry, letters and art work--whatever you have to share. If there is something about the newsletter that you like or don't like, let us know. We are open to suggestions and criticism.

We are trying to support the newsletter through ads rather than charging for the paper. So if you want to advertise something or just contribute, please do.

STAFF
Barbara Shreeve
Lee Hopwood
Sandy Covahey
Susan Baker

With Help From
Diane Fry
and others

Subscription rate $3 per. year.
We welcome all materials: articles, poems, letters and art work. We especially need art work.

Send all your inquires, contributions, etc. to:
Desperate Living
c/o S. Baker
3200 Ellerslie Ave.
Balt., Md., 21218

LETTER FROM THE STAFF

After seeing the first issue of the newsletter, some women told us that they didn't like the name "Desperate Living." They felt the word desperate was negative and meant that lesbian life was sad and hard. They thought we should have a name that implied that lesbian life was good and beautiful.

We agree that being a lesbian is good and beautiful; but we also know that living as a lesbian in our society isn't any kind of a rose-garden thing--it's hard as hell. Employers don't want lesbians. Landlords don't want lesbians. Families don't want lesbians. Lesbians spend their time with just about enough money and strength to get by. Lesbian living is a day-by-day lifetime crisis--and nobody in the straight world is out to do anything but keep making it harder. Lesbians are surviving in a society that hates them; and if we don't keep pushing every day, all the time, we're gonna die.

We picked the name Desperate Living for two reasons: first, as explained, because we feel that it realistically describes what living as a lesbian in our society means; and second, because we just plain like it.

DYKE POWER

About a dozen Baltimore women trucked up to New York to march in the lesbian section of the Christopher Street Parade June 24th. Our local group, though small in number, was large in enthusiasm. Joining together with our sisters from all over the East Coast, we raised our voices and our fists to make it known that our slogan, "The Lavender Menace is Alive and Growing", was indeed a fact. The Parade, 15 gay blocks long, started at Central Park to its destination in Washington Square, where the Gay Activists Alliance had scheduled the entertainment.

The Lesbian Feminist Liberation organized some fine activities for the weekend, among which were a Women's Arts Festival and a community supper followed by a Women's Dance that evening.

Our group plans to work with the New York Women's Center next year to set up a bus trip and provide free accommodations--so plan now to join in our show of "Dyke Power" at the Annual Christopher Street Parade.

Diane

She, a sapling is young and bending,
I, a spruce, am rough and yielding,
Lips against lips
Subtle back, supple thigh
An oak is born.

Susan Baker

Phone Booth

There lives in me
A woman with thighs of creamy steel
Who rides the wind.

Brook

Harbor View

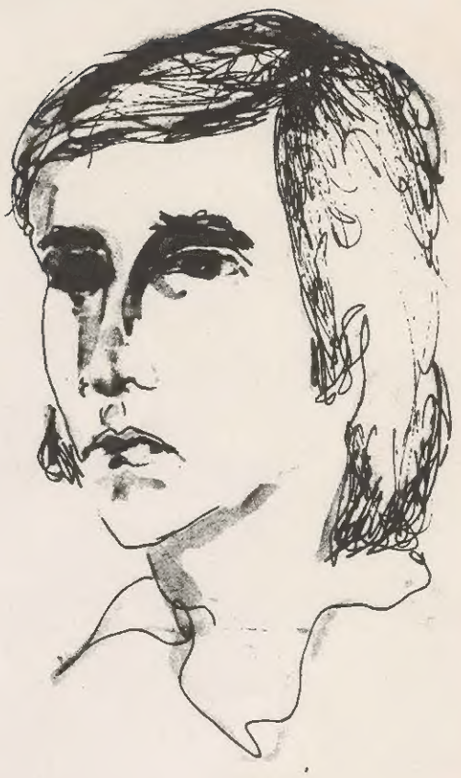
1730 Thames Street
Baltimore, Md., 21231
202-732-9477

OPEN 7 DAYS **KITTY-HOSTESS**

My Sexual Reality

You tried all you could
to get me to respond
the way I should
You said you wanted me
to "feel it too"
and I did give it a try
I tried to imagine
that you loved me
when you were touching me
with your body,
fingers, tongue, lips
I thought maybe then
I'd have an orgasm
but I can't fool myself
or my body
and what wasn't true
wasn't true
and I should have never
made love with you
when there wasn't
any love involved.

Fran



PEN AND INK by NANCY MYRON, WASHINGTON D.C.

part 1

by Sandy Covahey

I spent most of my life feeling ashamed and guilty because my family was poor, and therefore "bad". We didn't have money and the things it could buy; and that was some kind of sin or something-a disgrace-something we'd somehow brought on ourselves.

We were poor white trash-gutter rats, sewer water. Dirty Irish micks living in a solid middle class Protestant suburb of Baltimore County. My father would say,"you are healthy and strong-be tough-be proud of who you are-no one is better than anyone else". My mother would say,"always remember,no matter how bad things seem, there is always someone who is worse off".

I didn't care what my parents said. I was angry and bitter. I didn't want to be different. I wanted to be just as middle class, just as "good" as the kids in my neighborhood and at school. Most of all I wanted money and the things it could buy.

Ever since I can remember I hated school.I was always in trouble at school because of that hatred. Teachers, guidance counselors,and other people in authority always told me that I wasn't living up to my potential and that I was incorrigible. They told me if I didn't mend my ways I was going to get into deep trouble and never "make any thing of myself."

At one point I was supposed to go to Montrose School for Girls because I was incorrigible and a chronic truant. At the last minute my trial was cancelled because someone in the more affluent end of my family was a poker partner of the judge. (Typical American justice)

Even though I was "saved" from reform school by a distant relative taking pity on his poor relations; the experience scared me and I decided I didn't want to get caught again. At the same time I decided that I was going to: "pull myself up by the bootstraps" and become just as middle class as my friends.

At that time most of my friends were middle class. They thought I was "different" and yet somehow "cool" because my life was so different from theirs. I got status from them for being a "rebel who was always in trouble" and for knowing about things they'd been protected from, like sex.

I learned a lot from those friends-how to talk, how to act in hundreds of different situations, what to read, what movies to see, how to dress-in essence I learned how to "pass" as middle class.

Today, and in the last few years, I've been trying to unlearn alot of the shit I picked up from those friends and this middle class society. I've become a lesbian feminist and I've stopped feeling ashamed and guilty because of my background. I'm proud of who I am and where I came from- and I'm very angry.

I'm angry that the middle class people around me treated my family and other people like us as dirt to be walked over or avoided like a disease they might catch.

I'm angry about these and thousands of other things that happen to poor people daily. I've learned that this is a society run by white middle class and upper class males for the benefit of white middle and upper class males. Period. Poor women are fucked over in every way and this woman has had enough of it. Period.

D.L. ASKS:

"Can a dirty Irish mick and a New England prom queen make it ? ??"

PART 2

Will the Real Prom Queen, Please Stand up.

by Susan Baker

I am tired. I am hot. I am angry. In fact I am desperate. I shouldn't have to explain why. Read Marx. Read a psychology book. better still walk down any city street in the summer and look in any window.

Wowem are shit on. Poor working people are shit on. Black people are shit on. Lesbians are shit on and pushed into non-existence. The only people not shit on are white middle class men. Then America plays its greatest trick of all. It convinces us its our fault. We should have worked harder. Not developed an attitude. If we would just dress better, act like everyone else we would make it. Top of the ladder-we can be a personal secretary and called an "administrative assistant".

Forgive me. I'm bitchy. Its hot and I'm sitting in a crowded Read's at lunch hour because I won't have to tip. One half hour to get untired, get my head together. Working since I was 14. Thats time that will never be given back to me. The only worse thing than working is not working.

My pictures of childhood. Couldn't go out for basketball because I missed too many practices. Couldn't go out for anything. The junior prom. Did I feel exploited because I had to wear a pink formal and carry flowers given to me by a man? No. The catering service I worked for was hired to cater the prom so I wore a short black skirt and black apron serving my classmates. Finally about 10 o'clock I found my biology lab. partner had left me a quarter tip. I lost my temper and walked out. I spent the rest of the night walking the beach (we lived on the sea) trying to figure out what was"wrong with me". Why the same people were always elected to the student gov., get all A's, win scholarships; and I was never one of them. I went home to find out I had lost my job the same day my father had lost his.

No, I won't dwell on childhood, on not being able to afford college, or "running away." Running away, very romantic. When you are poor "running away" goes like this. You are not going to college; you are not getting married; so you leave home. It is one less mouth to feed. You are not a "runaway" until you are out in the world. Then you find out white Middle class men have set things up to keep middle class children at home.You can't sign a lease, can't walk the streets after curfew, can't get a job. Can't get a job that is unless it is a job they would rather see you in anyway; waitress, go-go girl, nude model. When I was 17 and really desperate I was even a prostitute. Those are the only job references you ever have; so, without a degree they are the only jobs you ever get. The good jobs go to the spoiled brats of the middle class who didn't "runaway" and went to college. Of course you can be smart and go to secretarial school.

ON "GETTING AN ATTITUDE"

Now I am 22. About a year ago I made up some middle class references and talked my way into a liberal college (liberal enough to need some poor white trash on scholarship to fill out it's quota.) and somewhere along the line developed a "class conciousness." If you are poor and loose your job for the 100th time because you pour hot coffee on the prick restaurant owner who keeps brushing against you behind the counter, they call it"an attitude". If you are middle class or in college you call it "class conciousness".

PEN AND INK by NANCY ADAIR, ALBUQUERQUE

Either way you are unemployed.

It seems for the past five years I have been ashamed of myself. In high school there was something wrong with me-that's why I was slated for a business course (I got out by sticking gum in the typewriter. You know where it says do not place bracelets or jewelry.) dressed funny (it took money to buy A line skirts and matching sweaters.) and never won a scholarship. Ashamed when my mother came to school because she was even frompier than I was. Ashamed I had to wait tables and had to take time off from school to go to a clinic because my parents couldn't afford a dentist.

Later I was ashamed I wasn't hip enough, hadn't read the right books, didn't have an education. I had the

choice of sitting by myself at meetings and parties because I didn't know what to say, how to say it and was sure no one wanted to hear it anyway, or go off by myself because other working class women were busy sucking up to middle class women too. Ashamed that I couldn't party all night because I had to go to work the next morning. Ashamed when I got caught wearing makeup because I had to, to keep my job. Ashamed I didn't have any famous friends, liberal parents, or vacations in Europe to talk about.

Even in the lesbian community if people had their way I would still be ashamed I wasn't butch enough, (most middle class women don't believe in roles but think they are butch),didn't hang in the right bar, didn't wear the right dyke outfits from Lord and Taylors.

But I am no longer ashamed. I am angry. I am angry that this country has no place for me or poor women like me. It is set up for white middle class men and awards women according to how well they serve men as wives and mothers, as sex objects, or as shit workers.

Women have a choice of two kinds of jobs, shit work serving men or working like hell in a"high class"job" to further some man or his company.

Karin

In no instance do woman themselves benefit. (In my last job my supervisor would sign his name to my layout work and he would get a bonus for it.)

I am angry at middle class women who still think they are better than me. To put it mildly I'm going to deck the next new gay social worker who trys to organize me, to give me gods word on roles and monogamy. I don't want to hear it from people who put down certain S. Balt. bars, greasers or D.A. haircuts. I especially don't want to hear it from middle class baby butches aping people they don't give a shit about. (You know the type, Andy Hardy imitating James Dean. We use to call them punks.) They are playing a game and we are their play things.

Thay are especially dangerous because they eat up your food, your energy, your money and when you are completely wasted run back to their middle class for security.

I am angry that most poor women are still ashamed of themselves. We have put down names for middle class women, women's libbers, and middle class bars but inside we still doubt we are as good as them. It is still our fault we can't make it.

I am angry when I see working class women acting as clowns for middle class approval. C.----& C_____ are loud, are bousterous, are very working class and dyky. They

are usually the only poor women in otherwise middle class movement circles. When they are completely used up, out of money, and no longer funny, they will be dropped like a hot potato. "Alone again naturally" wondering whats wrong with them.

The only thing worse is poor women trying to "make it" to pass as middle class. You see them all the time sitting in the corner of the dance, at the party out of place, feeling shy, wondering why they can't be excepted, "get in!" I've been their sister. I wish I could tell you, tell you what it's all about. We need each other more than we need their acceptance.

I am angry.I and every woman like me deserves the best of everything. The first step is to translate our self hate into anger.And when we translate our anger into action. Watch Out.....

RUMORS:RUMORS:RUMORS:

We are going to start the rumors for a change. So fasten your seat belts ladies. Here is the scoop on Desperate Living:

We recently kicked three women off the staff of D.L. One woman we asked to leave because she continually took on responsibilities she never completed. Once in a while is O.K. but she did it all the time.

We asked the other two women to leave because of their lack of understanding of, and disrespect for, poor people. It would be hypocritical for us to talk about a "class consciousness' and still allow staff members of D.L. to shit on poor people--including some of us on the staff.

We take ourselves and Desperate Living very seriously or we wouldn't waste the paper writing about this. We expect women who work with us to do the same. D.L. is a very "in" thing to do right now and a lot of women would like to join our staff. We hope a lot of those women do, but only if they are serious about what D.L. is doing.

It feels shitty to have to put women down in public. Almost as shitty as it felt to ask them to leave. Unfortunately, if women persist in crying on people's shoulders and playing for sympathy because of the action we've taken, we will have to defend ourselves in print.

Our staff is not closed to middle class women, but it is closed to middle class women who do not share our goals. And yes, we are (as someone has told us) "working class chauvinists." If poor women do not start putting themselves first, no one else will.

WOMEN'S POETRY READING
(two far out lesbian poets)

Wed., Aug. 8th, at 8 pm., at:
The Theater Project
45 E. Preston St.
Featuring:

Susan Baker--author of "She's a Jim-Dandy"

Lois E. Gomillion--author of soon to be published, Forty Acres and a Mule

Open Reading--so bring your own poems to read.

P.S. only women are invited.

THE WOMEN'S CENTER HAS MOVED
from Greenmount Ave. to:
101 E. 25th St.
Apt. B2
366-6475

My mother so tired
Her hands gnarled like a tree trunk
Knuckles, backs of hands
Veined and whorled like delicate leaves.
Heritage of a lifetime of dishwashing.

Her face with its Swedish cheekbones
And latent strength.
Eyes betraying understanding
Of that strange dark creature her daughter.
White-bronze skin.
Tired body shows her age. So tired.

My mother was a secretary
Who became a wife.
Who came from a not-well-off rural town
And wanted to be a figure skater.

by Brook

ART COLLECTIVE

The Art Collective is composed of both straight and gay women who are interested in the arts. If interested, call Karen at the Women's Center, weekdays 12 to 4 pm. at 366-6475

WHY NOT SABOTAGE YOUR OFFICE?

If you can't give money, WE NEED PAPER. Legal size white and off-white bond. Just slip a ream in your knapsack or pocketbook. Money, of course, is nice too.

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A GAY FAIRYTALE

Once upon a time in a town where sugar plums bumped from the trees to the ground, lived a black-eyed princess named Snowshoe. She was called Snowshoe because of the tale they tell of her birth. One evening, in the winter of a dark year when the king was returning from a hunt, he spyed a bundle wrapped in soft fern at the mouth of a great cave. Not venturing to go in beyond the mouth of the cave and anxious to see if the bundle was a baby or not, the king picked it up. The king saw that it was indeed a baby, a baby girl in fact, strung to a snowshoe. Now it so happened that in the palace bedroom just nine months before the queen had said to the king:

Henry (for that was his name), Henry, if you don't give me a baby girl this time I will never fuck you again.

The story of the king and queen's children is a strange one, often talked about in this town. The queen after nine long years of a tedious marriage (not to mention other more inflammatory adjectives) had borne nine sons and not one daughter. Although she had no inkling of it, there was a reason for this. You see the king was a wicked man, as wicked as most men go, and had given the queen a potion in their earlier years that had made her have but sons.

Now, when she at last threatened the king, he grew pale and frightened at her words:

But, but Sarah, he squirmed in his red silk pajamas. What do you mean? Don't you like your sons?

Sure Henry, my sons are OK but I want a daughter goddamit! Now hear me and hear me good. If I don't have a baby girl in nine months you're going to have to do your jerking off yourself!

Now the king could not think of such a thing. It might ruin his kingly manner for life. Good heavens, what would the servants say when they peek through the keyhole at night? For he knew the servants always peeked when the king and queen went to bed and the king rather liked the thought.

In actuality no one watched the king and queen in their bedroom at night.

Anyway when the king came upon the baby wrapped in soft fern upon a snowshoe he felt quite relieved and hence brought the babe back to his wife.

We will call her Snowshoe, the queen said.

Thus Snowshoe grew up a princess in a palace with nine brothers, a father with a belly like the plum pudding she ate for dessert, and a mother much out of touch.

But Snowshoe grew up quite different from the way that the king had conceived. Her manner was tough and burly, she associated only with street people and she came home smelling like dirt and dung. Though he yelled and whipped her every night it was to no avail. When she began to beat up his sons he decided to call the final halt.

Snowshoe, you're going to have to stop this immediately, he roared that night at the dinner table. Already the princess had smashed three of her brothers' noses, knocked two of them unconscious and threatened to castrate little Willie at breakfast.

Yeah. If you were goosed, pinched, squeezed and called jelly cunt you would do the same.

Enough! Enough! I've had enough! the king bellowed. Out! She goes out! I've just about had my fill of this derelict dyke with her foul mouth and antagonistic fist. She's not my child and I want nothing more to do with her. I should have left her by the old cave where I found her.

Henry, Henry, calm yourself please. Snowshoe was only defending herself against your wicked sons. Why, you know yourself know they are. You heard Mary Hanswell tell Martha Bushwick how they roam around nites in the old carriage they rigged up and 'sexually assaulted and violated young maidens'. Henry, you heard her say that. You know it's true.

The queen then began sobbing from fear and anger. By this time the king was livid pink with rage. He stammered and sputtered as he spoke.

Why--why----th-those sluts ought to be p-punished and, and wh-whipped! What were they doing uh-uh--

The king never finished his sentence for Snowshoe threw the rest of her plum pudding in his face. With a defiant look on her mug, out she stomped. This time she meant to get her due revenge.

The air was lightly pulping the year's first snow fall but the heat of rage in Snowshoe's body kept her warm and pumping strong. She could only think of the malfeasence of men that roamed far and wide in the town. That evil prevailed and dominated like a nest of snakes that squirmed and struck.

Remembering the king's words about the place of her birth Snowshoe felt an even greater anger. She had been told she was the king and queen's daughter though she often had doubted it very much. And so Snowshoe came to the cave in the forest where thick thistles now bordered the entrance. The mouth of the cave was locked in musty black but beyond the seventh perspiring stalactite, Snowshoe rounded a bend. There the light opened and a full room, warm and solid with the goings on of more than a dozen women strong, beamed its greeting upon Snowshoe. She was hugged and welcomed by all but her special attention was drawn to Rupp. Rupp was a tough-bodied, wild-eyed woman who kissed Snoeshoe longer and more langorously than the others.

Snowshoe, Rupp said affectionately when they were at last alone together on a thick fur in one far corner of the room. I've felt so much for you - having to live in that horrible castle with those men and no sister beside you. We tried to rescue you several times but we needed a hopeful spirit besides.

Snowshoe kissed her full open mouth and snugged her head into Rupp's neck.

If I had known you were here, she said hoarsely in Rupp's ear.

And when they made love in the warmth of each other, the candles danced in a flickering parastalsis of light. The cave walls seemed to swell in and out. Snowshoe had never experienced a pleasure such as the one she tumbled through now. Her voice rose and broke in her throat. Her eyes dimmed and splashed like water. And then when they were still the moon had risen high and full. It was red that night. Then the women all formed a circle and began their plot.

And it was thus that on the night of the blood red moon that more than a dozen angry women, their candles high and their voices strong, stormed into town on horseback and struck every man dead in his bed.

THE END

Reprinted from
Ain't I A Woman
AIAW Collective
Box 1169
Iowa City, Iowa

GAY WOMEN'S DANCE
TO BENEFIT DESPERATE LIVING

Fri., Aug. 10th., at 8 pm.
at the Theater Project
45 E. Preston St.
Baltimore, Md.

Donation $1.00 requested at the door.

GAY AA

Baltimore's first Gay Alcoholics Annonymous group meets each Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church. Entrance to the Parish House is at 1 West Hamilton Street. The group is organized by and for homosexual alcoholics in an effort to meet the unique needs of gay people within the framework of Alcoholics Annonymous. For further information call 467-4667. (Group is half women.)

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Every Tuesday 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Elementary School #51, off Ellerslie Avenue between 34th and 35th Street, across from the Stadium. For more information call 467-4676.

GAY WOMEN'S OPEN HOUSE

Every first and third Thursday - 8:00 p.m. For more information call 243-1623.

$$money$$

Desperate Living needs money to keep publishing. If Desperate Living is going to survive, we have to have support in the form of donations, subscriptions, and paid ads. If we don't get money, this is the last issue.

Send donations
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Songs to a Handsome Woman

by Rita Mae Brown

illustrations by Ginger Legato

copies available for 2.00 each or 1.50 for orders over 5.

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Baltimore, Md.
Val sings on Sat.

This list is for your convenience. It is not a complete listing. It is not recommending any particular bar or bars.

THE COMMON WOMAN

The Common Woman is trying to put out a small women's magazine. Help bring us together. Send contributions--writings and art work---with a self addressed envelope to:

The Common Woman
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Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

diana press inc.

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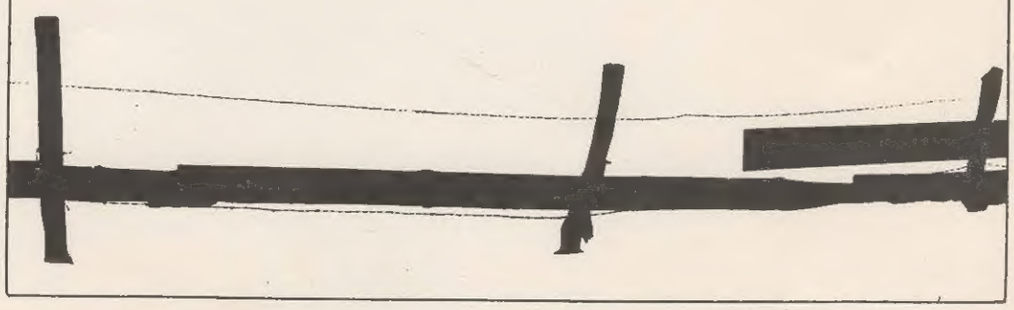

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WOMEN'S DANCE

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Friday, Aug. 10, at 8 pm.
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45 W. Preston St.

$1. donation requested

WOMEN ONLY!!